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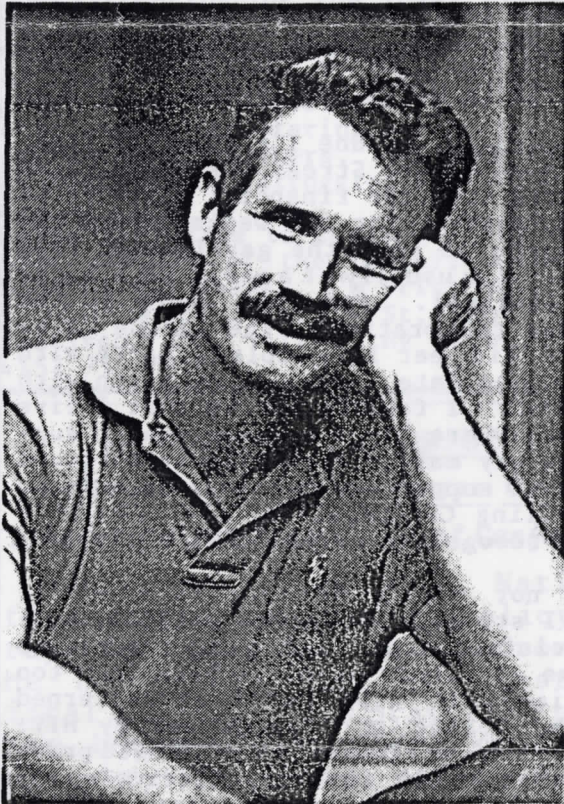


National Affirmation Gathering

September 20, 21 & 22, 1991

Grant Park - Aldersgate UMC - Atlanta GA

...Come Home



Recognizing a frequent sense of isolation and fragmentation, we invite gay, lesbian, and bisexual United Methodists, their families and friends to "Come Home" and share in community fellowship and support. This is an opportunity to joyfully celebrate your whole spiritual and sexual being in a Christian context. According to Chris Glaser in his book, *Come Home*, "Bodily Experience whether sensual, emotional, political, or prayerful, is spiritual experience."

Draw strength from the shared experiences of your brothers and sisters in the struggle, and learn the skills you need to make a difference in your local community and the United Methodist Church as a whole.

Chris Glaser speaks and writes about the reconciliation of the lesbian/gay and the Christian Community. He has led several workshops and retreats on subjects which have included worship, prayer, the spiritual life, the Bible, ministry and, of course, the many dimensions of the experience of gay and lesbian Christians.

A NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS WILL BE PRESENTED TO HELP LOCAL GROUPS!

DEADLINE FOR REGISTERING IS SEPTEMBER 1st!

For information call Jim [redacted]; Sue [redacted];
Dan [redacted]; Jay [redacted]; Mike [redacted];
or Peggy [redacted]. BUT HURRY!!!

WHAT IS OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH?

As we approach the time of General Conference, we cannot help but reflect upon the relationship between Affirmation and the United Methodist Church. When the National Council discussed that relationship at the January meeting we surfaced a variety of positions, ranging from those who see Affirmation as an activist, lobbying organization with a primary purpose to promote change in the UMC to those who want Affirmation to "be the church," with decreasing reference to the institutional structure of the denomination. Within this spectrum I offer the following conclusions, drawn from our discussion:

1. We intend to retain connection with the United Methodist Church, to provide a prophetic witness, to be a mission outpost, and to change the church of which we are a vital part.

2. Part of this connection involves working for legislative change at General Conference, both because our general membership wants legislative change and because we represent the interests of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals who are not members of Affirmation.

3. Attempts to influence legislation are neither our sole nor our most important purpose at General Conference. Our presence models a non-hierarchical, inclusive, vital Christian community that challenges the institutionalism of the conference. We also provide a setting for clergy and lay people to clarify their identities and vocations, educate themselves, reflect upon their life journeys and worship with an inclusive community.

4. Outside of our involvement with General Conference, we retain an on-going commitment to issues raised by local Affirmation chapters and to local and regional organization and activism.

5. We recognize and accept our different commitments, inviting people to work on those aspects of Affirmation's program that have the most meaning for them.

Jeanne Knepper
Convenor
Witness Committee

OUR GOAL--REVITALIZING LOCAL GROUPS & STARTING NEW ONES!

Two of my main concerns upon entering high school were that I would go bald and that I was gay. Twenty years later, I still worry about my hair line but now I celebrate my gay identity. I embrace words like queer, fag and homo. They no longer cause a sick feeling in my stomach; rather, feelings of pride. When a fellow council member addresses me as girlfriend I feel both extremely proud and loved.

During the month of June I'm on a gay high. Walking down Market Street there are rainbow banners from the financial district to our Civic Center. For two weeks before the Pride Parade we have the gay/lesbian film festival. I'm usually at a movie each night of the festival. And then there is the parade and celebration. The parade is so long that this year I was able to march with ACT-UP Golden Gate, run back and march with Bethany UMC. I feel fortunate that I live in a place where I get a great deal of support as a gay male. I am able to surround myself with supportive friends, worship in a Reconciling Congregation, and live in a city that recognizes my worth as a citizen.

Now I'm not saying my life is a bed of roses. I struggle with money matters, personal relationships, and health concerns just like everybody else. I have lost too many friends to AIDS and I am concerned about the health of friends and my HIV+ status. Still I recognize that I hold privileges that other lesbian, bisexuals and gay men do not share in their communities. Their struggle is still my struggle. I want everyone to be surrounded by supportive friends, worship in a Reconciling Congregation and live and work in a place that is supportive of their sexual identities.

I am a member of the Affirmation National Council because this is the best way I'm able to help in our march towards Zion. I can have my name and address listed where others can not. I can serve as a contact person, resource person, or just a name in a newsletter that lets individuals know that there is someone out there. On the Council I work in a committee that is involved with regional organizing and communications, mainly the national newsletter.

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Our Spokespersons Speak Out

COPY OF LETTER SENT TO THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER:

We were disappointed but not surprised by the Reporter's failure to seek the reaction of gay, lesbian and bisexual United Methodists for its June 28 story about the Presbyterian General Assembly. The Assembly rejected a study committee report that, among other findings, affirmed the validity of loving relationships between people of the same gender. It is just one more example of how society and church discount our lives by acting as if we did not exist --even when we are the subject of the story!

Here is what we would have said if we had been asked:

The vote of the Presbyterian General Assembly demonstrates well how little rational analysis has to do with decisions of this kind. The most likely cause for this outcome is fear--irrational, gut-wrenching fear of emotional and physical attraction to persons of the same gender. This fear has been instilled in nearly all members of this society, including those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. It overrides the intellect and produces "don't confuse me with the facts" reaction that makes the report of a study committee irrelevant. Rather than owning up to these feelings, most church people justify them with a literalistic approach to Scripture that most Presbyterians (and most United Methodists) abandoned long ago for other subjects.

Delegates to national church bodies are also concerned about potential adverse impacts on the institution if they challenge their larger membership to confront their fears and to act with justice in spite of them. But these delegates' involvement in the institution makes it difficult to separate genuine concern for the well-being of the church from crass self-interest. Clergy delegates are likely to be among those with the most to lose if the bureaucracy is threatened. Lay delegates are understandably loathe to risk their positions of power, influence and opportunities for church-funded travel.

For these reasons we can easily imagine church leaders convincing themselves "for the good of the church" to ignore findings that they inwardly admit would support a more affirming stance toward their lesbian, gay and bisexual sisters and brothers. What a shame they cannot be expected to occupy a vanguard position in the struggle for justice on this issue.

Fortunately for us all, the Gospel offers freedom from both irrational fear and bondage to self-serving conservatism, as well as institutional idolatry. We con-

tinue to pray that the United Methodist Church will not, like Lot's wife of old, be paralyzed by attachment to what God calls it to leave behind. We believe the Spirit of a loving, liberating God is leading us relentlessly toward a better place.

Morris L. Floyd Gloria Soliz
Spokespersons
United Methodists for Lesbian,
Gay and Bisexual Concerns

AND THE LETTER AS IT APPEARED IN THE JULY 26, 1991 ISSUE OF THE REPORTER:

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Morris L. Floyd
Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE POWER OF PRAYER CAN BE AMAZING!

This newsclipping was recently sent to the Newsletter:

Call for End to Homophobia

For those interested in opening the Methodist faith to greater acceptance of gays and lesbians, there's a number you can call. The United Methodist Church has a living prayer center that accepts prayer requests from all over the country. Take time to call them and insist that they pray for the end of homophobia in the church. If they resist, simply tell them that you, too, are a believer and have just as much right to express your prayer concerns as the person answering the phone.

The prayer line is completely confidential. You should give a first name and the area you are calling from. Call as often as you like—some people have been calling the line daily for three months!

[REDACTED]. (Can take up to 12 rings!)



OUR GOOD FRIENDS AND LOYAL SUPPORTERS, HARRY & MILLY EYCHANER, HONORED BY ILLINOIS GROUP

IGLTF Rewards Human Rights Activists

The Illinois Gay and Lesbian Task Force will honor five people with "Human Rights Achievement Awards" at its annual dinner May 18 at the Metropolitan Club.

"All of the Human Rights Achievement Award winners have demonstrated their friendship to the gay and lesbian community through many years of speaking out against homophobia," said Joanne Trapani, IGLTF co-chair. "We're proud to honor each of these individuals."

Honorees are Ava Allen, who established Chicago's oldest lesbian bar, Lost and Found, 3058 W. Irving Park; John Chester, who is active in campaigns and lobbying; Howard Eychaner, an entrepreneur involved in many community projects, including testifying on behalf of gay rights legislation at both the state and local levels; and Milly Eychaner, involved in the Names Project and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; among other organizations.



Howard & Milly Eychaner

INTERNATIONAL GAY CORRESPONDENCE CLUB

The last few months you can find advertisements in many gay newspapers, all over the world, of INTERGAY, a worldwide penclub for gay men.

What exactly is INTERGAY?

The man behind the idea is Harry Vroon in the Netherlands. He wrote us: "INTERGAY is a worldwide penclub for gay men. Its aim and ideal is to offer to as many gays as possible, wherever they live, the opportunity to correspond with one or more gays anywhere in the world. In this way you may discover that though there are gay men everywhere, their living conditions are extremely varied. In some countries homosexual life is far more undisturbed than in others. Read and write about each other's possibilities and impossibilities, and get a broader perspective on gay life. You might be a support to others and give them a good time."

"It is fun, moreover, to tell each other various adventures and to exchange photographs and/or magazines."

"There is, however, more to life than being gay. You can, of course, write and ask about any other subject you are interested in. Art, culture, nature, current events, your job or your hobbies--the list is endless."

"The nicest thing about it is to realize that, to whomever and about whatever you are writing, you are always in touch with a gay man in another part of the world."

"Do join us-- INTERGAY will be even more enjoyable when you participate."

If you are interested, you can write for more information and a black form to Harry Vroon, [REDACTED] Lienden, The Netherlands.

DEADLINE FOR MATERIAL FOR THE
WINTER NEWSLETTER IS NOVEMBER 1st

Please send material to NEWSLETTER
c/o Affirmation of Cape Cod,
[REDACTED] Hyannis, MA [REDACTED]

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When someone writes to our post office box for information about a local group, a copy of that letter goes to a regional organizer who contacts that individual with the information they have requested. People move and things change all the time, it's hard to keep up with all the changes. We need to constantly update this information so that we can begin to build stronger lines of communication between the national organization and the local groups. I need copies of your newsletters and names and addresses of contact persons in your area.

At the Fall Gathering we are making another attempt at building these lines of communication and helping to support the local Affirmation groups. Workshops are being presented to help give individuals ideas about strengthening the local group. We are encouraging local groups to send at least two folks to the meeting in Atlanta. The Council at the spring gathering placed a high level of importance on revitalizing local groups and starting new chapters. WE are our best teachers. WE need to share our experiences, struggles and joys.

Please feel free to contact me as well as other members of the Council about your concerns and needs. I'm Fritz Schultz and my address is [REDACTED] San Francisco, CA [REDACTED]. My home phone is [REDACTED].

AN UNCOMMON FELLOWSHIP:

Reflections for an Inclusive Church

A booklet to Challenge General Conference

A number of years ago, National Affirmation adopted a policy of prayerful presence in confronting the homophobia with the institutional Church. This prayerful presence becomes particularly challenging every four years at the General Conference, the national decision-making body of the United Methodist Church.

National Affirmation has tried to be creative in confronting homophobia and injustice that very often becomes part of the deliberation and actions of the General Conference. Hopefully, this booklet will be one more way in which lesbians, gays, bisexuals and our friends can share our stories and make our voices heard. Perhaps we can give the "issue" of "homosexuality" a human face.

We are very interested in whatever material you would like to submit. However, all submissions are subject to an editing and selection process. We hope to present a verbal collage of expressions pointing toward a truly inclusive Church.

HERE ARE A FEW GUIDELINES WE WOULD LIKE TO OFFER:

Format: Poems, prayers, songs, stories and short meditations are all welcome. No submission can exceed 200 words. All submissions must be in clear print or typewritten.

Use of Inclusive Language: We want to model for the Church a creative and explosive use of language. All submissions must use inclusive language in referring to humankind and the deity.

Theological Perspective: We are attempting to embrace a wide variety of theological perspectives. However, submissions must be in general agreement with the Mission Statement of Affirmation, e.i. lesbian and gay-affirming.

Selection: All submissions will be reviewed by the editorial team. We will print as many submissions as we can. However, all submissions are subject to editing and a final selection process.

Use: The booklet will be distributed to Affirmation friends and supporters prior to General Conference. It will also be available at General Conference for delegates who want to purchase it.

Profit: We will be selling the booklet for a small fee to offset expenses. In the unlikely event that this booklet makes money, all funds will go to offset the financial expense of Affirmation's presence at General Conference.

Confidentiality: We need a name (pseudonyms are ok) and address for each submission. If you wish your submission to be anonymous in the booklet, we will honor this request. Please indicate this clearly on the submission itself.

Deadline: All submissions should be in by November 15, 1991.

Mailing Address: Send your submissions to Randy, c/o Affirmation, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204.



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